

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Rockingham College of Further Education

June 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses. The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 77/95

ROCKINGHAM COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE REGION

Inspected January – March 1995

Summary

Rockingham College of Further Education is a significant provider of further education and training in the Dearne Valley area of South Yorkshire. It offers a wide range of predominantly vocational courses for adults and school leavers. It is a focus for the economic regeneration of the Dearne Valley, providing increasingly flexible learning opportunities to young and adult unemployed people. The college is making a significant local contribution to the achievement of national targets through its increasing range of courses. It has effective links with industry, local schools, higher education institutions and local community groups. The governors, management and staff have a shared commitment to the aims of the college. The college has an open management style, effective communications and a strong emphasis on teamwork. Staff provide students with good teaching and support. Students' achievements, particularly in vocational courses, are high. A highly effective quality assurance system underlies all the college's work and is accompanied by extensive staff-development opportunities. The college has well-advanced plans to improve its computerised management information systems and address some deficiencies in its accommodation. The college should expand the range and volume of its basic education provision, strengthen some of its student support procedures and address the low retention rates in some areas.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

| Aspects of cross-college provision | | Grade |
|---|------------------------------|-------|
| Responsiveness and range of provision | | 2 |
| Governance and management | | 1 |
| Students' recruitment, guidance and support | | 2 |
| Quality assurance | | 1 |
| Resources: | staffing | 2 |
| | equipment/learning resources | 2 |
| | accommodation | 2 |

| Curriculum area | Grade | Curriculum area | Grade |
|--|-------|---|-------|
| Mathematics and information technology | 2 | Health and community care | 2 |
| Construction | 2 | Humanities | 2 |
| Business studies | 2 | Basic education and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities | 2 |
| Hotel and catering | 1 | | |
| Leisure and tourism | 2 | | |

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INTRODUCTION

1 Rockingham College of Further Education in South Yorkshire was inspected during the autumn term 1994 and the spring term 1995. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term 1994. Subsequently two full-time inspectors and seven part-time registered inspectors spent a total of 24 days on specialist subject inspections. Inspectors visited 72 classes, held meetings with college staff and inspected a broad range of students' work. The inspectors also had access to an extensive variety of documentation relating to the college and its courses. In the week beginning 6 March 1995, four full-time and three part-time registered inspectors, including one inspector with experience from outside the world of education, spent a further 34 inspector days looking at aspects of cross-college provision. During the period of the inspection there were meetings with governors, college managers, teaching and support staff, students, head teachers of local schools, employers, and representatives of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, the Rotherham careers service, community groups, the Rotherham Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the Barnsley/Doncaster TEC.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Rockingham College of Further Education opened as a college of further education in 1976. It has its origins in a mechanics' institute which later became an adult education institute. The college primarily serves the Dearne Valley community but also attracts students from the whole of South Yorkshire. The main site is located in the centre of Wath-upon-Dearne and there are two additional sites to the east and west along the Dearne Valley. The college provides courses in local schools and community centres. There are three colleges of further education within eight miles of the college and four 11-18 schools within four miles.

3 At the time of inspection 5,268 students were enrolled at the college of whom 921 were full-time students. There are 4,544 students aged 19 or over. Enrolments by age and by level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college employs 84 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 72 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

4 Students come from a wide range of educational and personal backgrounds. Many have no formal educational qualifications. A Rotherham TEC survey reported in 1993 that 40 per cent of adults within the college catchment area were not proficient in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

5 The Dearne Valley is an area of economic deprivation. The decline and closure of the traditional industries of coal and steel, and little subsequent growth in new industries, have resulted in high levels of unemployment. The male unemployment rate of 19.6 per cent is one of

the highest in the country. A high proportion are registered as long-term unemployed. Over the past five years the female unemployment rate has declined to just over 7 per cent. Much of the employment for women is on a part-time basis. Unemployment throughout the Yorkshire and Humberside region averages 10.3 per cent.

6 A bid by the Dearne Valley Partnership, representing three local authorities and the private sector, has resulted in extra government funding under the City Challenge scheme to promote the economic regeneration of the area. The college aims to play a leading part in this regeneration by its education and training provision to support the anticipated growth in the local economy. It plans to open a new centre with funds from City Challenge and the European Regional Development Fund and to work in partnership with other further and higher education providers in the region. The college's mission statement has five key commitments: to provide opportunities and encouragement to the individual learner; to maximise students' access to these opportunities; to play an active role in the life of the local community; to work in partnership with local industry to provide training and retraining; and to ensure that all its services are of a high quality.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college is making a significant contribution to the achievement of national targets for education and training in the area. Student enrolments have exceeded growth targets for the last two years. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are offered in more than 74 combinations of subject areas and levels and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in six. This year 26 new programmes were offered at NVQ levels 1 to 5 and 25 more are planned. There are also General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses, although the number of students taking GCE A levels is very small. The college seeks to provide opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to acquire nationally recognised qualifications. National targets for education and training are used in planning documents disseminated to staff. The principal represents the college on a TEC working group which is addressing the achievement of national targets for education and training in the region.

8 The college has a high proportion of adult and part-time students. However, the college is steadily extending its range of programmes to cater for school leavers and full-time students. An effective arrangement of working groups systematically plans these curriculum developments. Some programmes are unusual and innovative, for example a RSA Examinations Board (RSA) diploma for organisers of community groups. There are curricular links with higher education. For example, a diploma in primary health care allows credits to be accumulated with the University of Sheffield and a teachers' certificate has progression routes to Sheffield Hallam University. However, an access course to prepare adults for higher

education is restricted to social sciences and has very low recruitment. There is high-quality provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are, however, some gaps in provision. Adult basic education and full-time foundation level programmes are limited, although the TEC has identified a substantial need in this area. There are no advanced computing or information technology programmes and the range of courses in business studies is narrow.

9 The college offers opportunities for unemployed adults in a range of vocational areas. For example, the catering section was established in 1982 to retrain redundant steel workers with help from the Iron and Steel Rehabilitation Benefit Scheme. Careful planning has ensured that, as this market has declined, students with other backgrounds have been recruited. The catering industry lead body has now approved the college as a centre of excellence. Catering students can start individualised programmes of study at any time in the college year and can progress from foundation to advanced NVQ qualifications either on a fast track or at a more gradual rate according to need and ability. Between 1992 and 1994, 100 per cent of catering students were successful in finding employment on completion of their courses.

10 Teaching and learning is provided in a variety of settings and modes of attendance. The college extends its provision into local community centres including some housing estates where there are very high levels of unemployment. Increasingly teaching, learning and assessment are provided in the workplace. Some students are supported by the college to enable them to work mostly at home. Weekend classes are being piloted. The college aims to structure its entire curriculum into units of study and increase resources for independent learning to allow students to start at different times of the year, use a variety of ways of learning and progress at different rates. Although some sections have made great progress with this approach, others have a long way to go and there are still some barriers to its full achievement throughout the college.

11 The college seeks to complement the work of local schools rather than duplicate provision unnecessarily. As a result, relationships are good and valuable collaborative links have been established. College staff assist some local schools in teaching vocational units to sixth form students, co-operate with them over joint GNVQ developments, share science and technology resources and engage in some joint planning to increase students' access to GCE A level subjects. The college participates in courses for disaffected school pupils, resulting in improved progression rates to further education or jobs. Pupils from special schools attend the college for part of their course.

12 There are productive links with local business, including a well-established programme of work placements. The college's NVQ unit promotes NVQs both within the college and with small and medium-sized enterprises. It is supported by substantial European Regional Development

Fund and TEC funding. In the two years of operation, 494 small and medium enterprises have been contacted, 309 assisted towards achieving NVQs and 50 target qualifications obtained. Two major food companies use the college to deliver NVQ communications skills training, partly on company premises. A range of partnerships is being developed between the college and local industry through which the college trains work-based NVQ assessors. This industry-linked work requires greater co-ordination, clearer targets, business plans and more direct links with marketing. The roles of the college's business training manager and college working group are being reviewed with these objectives in mind. College staff are vigorous in representing the college on a wide range of advisory and consultative groups across the region. This network of contacts is used to gain labour market intelligence and inform course planning.

13 As a major source of training expertise the college contributes to the cultural and economic regeneration of the Dearne Valley. Plans are at an advanced stage to use committed funds from Dearne Valley City Challenge, the European Regional Development Fund and other sources to establish a new centre. This will provide education and training for some 800 full-time equivalent students. It will be owned and managed by the college and involve other further and higher education institutions as partners. It is aimed at supporting small and medium sized enterprises within a designated enterprise zone. Extra funding has been obtained to build a sophisticated information technology network linking all those involved.

14 The college has an officer to promote European awareness across the college. Many full-time courses have European studies options and modern languages are also frequently included. Accreditation of this work is limited. There is a developing programme of visits and exchanges which involved some 42 students last year. A European national dress evening is held in conjunction with a European week for schools.

15 The college publicity officer arranges visits to schools and attendance at careers and other events, drawing in staff from college sections. A part-time prospectus is delivered to 75,000 homes. Sections of the college carry out marketing activities, collect relevant market intelligence and use a range of promotional leaflets. The co-ordination of marketing requires further attention. There is no comprehensive database, linked to the college management information system, which would enable the evaluation of marketing activities. There is little use of destination data to add interest and relevance to publicity materials.

16 The college has an equal opportunities policy and a statement of practice. A working party and co-ordinator regularly review and update implementation of the policy. There is extensive reference to equal opportunities in college literature and it features in student induction. However, a review of curriculum content has still to be carried out to ensure that appropriate learning materials are developed.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

17 The corporation has 20 members, including the principal, two members of staff drawn from the teaching and non-teaching staff of the college, and one student. Corporation members bring expertise from a variety of business and professional backgrounds which reflect the areas of work in the college. The corporation has recently co-opted a representative of the Dearne Valley Partnership. At the time of the inspection the representation of the Rotherham TEC was temporarily unfilled. Governors are active in promoting the interests of the college in the local community.

18 The governors have a clear vision of the mission of the college and of its key role in the regeneration of the local community. This vision is shared by the principal and staff of the college. Governors take a keen interest in the life of the college, maintaining regular contact with the staff through social meetings and the attachment of each governor to a section of the college. The two staff governors form a valuable link between the corporation and the teaching and non-teaching staff. For example, they ensure that corporation minutes are circulated and that individual members of staff receive the information which is relevant to them. Training for governors takes place regularly and recent events have included presentations on financial, curricular and personnel issues. New governors are assisted by an induction pack which gives them helpful information and guidance about their role.

19 The governing body has committees dealing with finance and general purposes, audit, personnel and remuneration, and premises. These committees are appropriately constituted. The full meetings of the governing body and meetings of the subcommittees are well attended and effectively supported with the necessary papers. Governors have contributed to, and approved, a strategic plan which includes an operating statement against which the plan is monitored.

20 The senior management team of the college consists of the principal, vice-principal and four other managers with financial, curricular and site responsibilities. The college's management structure was re-organised in 1993 from three departments to fourteen sections. Section leaders are responsible directly to the principal for the work of their section, and each also undertake a cross-college responsibility. For their cross-college roles they are responsible to members of the senior management team. The section leaders meet monthly with the principal and senior management team. The principal exercises effective leadership and section leaders are encouraged to be innovative and responsive in managing their sections. The new structure works well and is readily understood by staff at all levels. It enables sections to respond flexibly to the demands of rapid change. There is a strong emphasis on the development of team relationships in a collegiate atmosphere. Staff respond positively to the open, accessible leadership of the principal and the senior management

team. The new structure is kept under review and changes made when necessary.

21 Each college site is managed by a member of the senior management team, who interrelates with a wide cross-section of college staff. This enables teaching and non-teaching staff to have easy access to senior managers and promotes consistency in standards.

22 Communications are highly effective. The principal usually holds full staff meetings at least once a term and keeps the staff fully informed about developments. Staff at all levels are involved in the strategic planning process. Part-time staff are encouraged to play a full part in section and course team meetings. In 1994, the terms of reference of the academic board were changed to make it more effective. A number of working parties and committees were formed which enable staff from different sites and sections to work together on specific tasks. Staff are able to demonstrate awareness of a wide range of issues affecting the college and have detailed knowledge of the policies which they are implementing. Procedures and responsibilities are clearly detailed in manuals which form part of the college's quality assurance system. A college newsletter is regularly produced and staff contribute many of the items.

23 The college is managing a period of dynamic growth. Prudent financial management has enabled reserves to be built up which are to be used to support planned development. Resources and equipment have improved substantially in recent years. In 1993-94 the average level of funding was £15.17 per unit. This has risen to £18.50 in 1994-95. The median for general further education colleges and tertiary colleges is £18.17 and the median for all sector colleges is £19.01. The college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

24 Financial allocations for supplies and materials are made to curriculum areas, support and administrative centres. Committed expenditure is monitored by the finance officer. Teaching hours for full-time and part-time staff are delegated to sections and their use is monitored. The college has not yet established a basis for calculating unit costs. It plans to introduce a pilot scheme in four sections for 1995-96.

25 Enrolment targets are set and achieved. Enrolments are estimated at section level and collated by the senior management team. Targets are then set by the finance and management information officers. In 1993-94, the college exceeded its targets by over 30 per cent and current trends indicate a similar increase for 1994-95.

26 Computerised management information systems are developing but have not yet been fully implemented. The college has appointed a management information systems officer, established a policy, drawn up a detailed action plan for the period 1994-96, and purchased over £50,000 of equipment. The current student record system has been transferred to

new software and the financial system software updated. The range of reports and performance indicators produced is expanding as new systems and structures have been established. Training for middle managers will be required to enable them to take full advantage of the new systems.

27 Enrolments are processed through an optical mark reader and registers are produced centrally. Retention rates are regularly monitored at course and section level through a twice-yearly review. Procedures for ascertaining the destinations of students are laid down in the quality manual. Destination information is received from 90 per cent of college students.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

28 The support for students reflects the commitment of staff to the provision of a caring, supportive learning environment. The college's mission statement clearly states its commitment to meeting the needs of individual students. Students are particularly appreciative of the willingness of all staff to respond to requests for help. Students feel valued as individuals and speak highly of the care and consideration extended to them by staff at all levels within the college.

29 Course teams have developed a wide range of leaflets to provide prospective students with information about the programmes they offer. A system for managing applications has been devised to ensure that potential students are referred to the appropriate person within the college for advice and guidance. A member of staff has been given specific responsibility for initial contact with adult students. For those students who are unsure about the programme they wish to study, information is given about the range of options available within the college and also, where appropriate, those at other colleges. Many of the students interviewed during the inspection felt that they had been given clear, helpful and impartial advice about the programmes which were most suited to their needs. The provision of free taster days for languages is an example of the college's concern that students should understand the nature of a programme before enrolment. Adult students who are unsure of the programme they wish to follow are particularly appreciative of the opportunity to sample a number of vocational programmes.

30 There is a policy for the accreditation of prior learning and a co-ordinator has been appointed to lead the development of this work. Accreditation of prior learning is available across the college but is at various stages of development within different programme areas. It is particularly well established within catering and business administration.

31 Each programme team devises an induction programme for new students. This lasts a week and enables students to familiarise themselves with the college and the programme for which they have enrolled. Some programme teams have developed induction booklets. For part-time students, and for those who enrol for programmes after September,

induction is the responsibility of course tutors. Generally, students are very positive about the induction process and feel that it provides them with all the information they need.

32 During induction all full-time students undertake an assessment of their skills in mathematics and English. This is administered and assessed by a member of the specialist learning support staff. The results are communicated to the students' course tutors. A learning support tutor works on each of the college's main sites. Learning support is negotiated between the course team and the support tutor. It can be provided on a one-to-one basis, within small groups or through open-learning workshops. If a number of students within one course are identified as needing support, the support tutor may work with the course tutor within the classroom. These arrangements enable learning support to be tailored to the needs of individual students. A range of useful learning support materials, specifically linked to work within vocational areas, has been developed by staff. Insufficient time is allocated to learning support tutors to enable them to work with vocational tutors.

33 Tutors have been allocated to specific programme teams to help students improve their core skills of numeracy, communications and informative technology. This arrangement is effective in enabling staff to work together on the design of assignments which integrate core and vocational skills. A working group, with representatives from different programme teams has been established to monitor the teaching of core skills and to plan future developments in this area.

34 Responsibility for tutorial support is devolved to course teams. Course tutors also act as personal tutors. Case loads vary, as does the time allocated for tutorials. There are no clear criteria for the allocation of time to tutorials. In practice, course tutors arrange individual tutorials with students on at least two occasions each term. These sessions are used effectively to monitor students' progress and to update their records of achievement. Within some teams, group tutorials are held on a regular basis. In the health and social care programme there is a tutorial programme to support tutors in this work. Responsibility for delivering a programme of personal and social education is not clearly defined. There is no agreed guidance programme or curriculum to which all students have an entitlement. All members of staff will provide support to any student who requests it. However, there is no-one within the college who has the responsibility for co-ordinating the support offered to students and no central reference point for specialist advice and guidance such as welfare rights and benefits.

35 Records of achievement are valued by staff and students. They form an integral part of students' programmes and are well developed throughout the college. The use of photographs to provide evidence of the achievements of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly noteworthy.

36 The importance of providing a confidential counselling service within the college has been recognised. Two members of staff have been allocated a total of nine hours a week to provide this service. A room has been allocated specifically for counselling to enable confidentiality to be maintained. Students are informed of the service during the induction programme.

37 Careers education and guidance is provided through a service agreement with Rotherham careers service. A careers officer is allocated to a specific programme area and the support offered is negotiated between the officer and the programme team. This arrangement is viewed positively by all those involved. It enables the careers officer to build up a relationship with students from the beginning of a course and to provide an appropriate input at each stage of the programme. The college also works closely with external agencies who provide guidance specifically to meet the needs of adults. The resource centres hold a wide range of careers information, including software to help students search for suitable employment.

38 The students' union makes a positive contribution to the college. There is a committee which consists of elected representatives from each programme. The committee meets regularly. It is particularly successful in promoting social events which contribute to the community ethos of the college. Its success is due in part to the willingness of staff to volunteer their services to support the students.

39 Students are well informed of their rights and responsibilities. Details of these are clearly specified within the college's charter which is given to all students at enrolment. Topics such as equal opportunities and the college's policy on sanctions are given further consideration during the induction programme.

40 Students' attendance is recorded at each session. Students who are absent from college are expected to contact the college to inform staff of the reason for their absence. The course tutor is responsible for contacting students who are absent without explanation. There is no agreed system for this and some staff are unsure about the procedure for reporting absences. Attendance figures are monitored at half-termly intervals by programme team leaders. The college sets a target attendance figure of 90 per cent for full-time students. During the week of the inspection, the highest levels of attendance were in business (85 per cent) and caring (86 per cent). The lowest level of attendance was in construction (60 per cent).

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

41 Of the 72 sessions inspected, 75 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. The strengths and weaknesses of the work were evenly balanced in a further 22 per cent of sessions. The following table shows the grades awarded.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

| Programmes Grade | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Totals |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|---------------|
| GCE AS/A level and access courses | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| GCSE | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| GNVQ | 2 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| NVQ | 3 | 9 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 15 |
| Other | 6 | 19 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 30 |
| Total | 13 | 41 | 16 | 2 | 0 | 72 |

42 In mathematics, computing and information technology the classes for adults returning to education were particularly well taught. Students were encouraged to contribute in such a way that any lack of understanding or of recent experience, was turned to positive account and became the basis for useful discussion. In this way students' enjoyment, confidence and motivation were increased. Information technology forms an important part of all vocational courses and helpful materials are used to allow students to work at their own pace both in classes and resource centres. However, the materials are not always sufficiently related to the vocational area. Materials for mathematics teaching are not developed to provide a co-ordinated learning scheme which would allow students to progress through the various levels at an appropriate pace.

43 In construction, good use was made of learning packages which enabled students, in consultation with their teachers, to vary their learning tasks to suit their needs. The learning packages were well integrated with practical activities. Students requiring extra help with basic skills were given support and encouragement in small groups. The students spoke highly of the teacher's approach and found the exercises enjoyable, though demanding. In a sign-work class, students were designing signs for use by a local football club. This activity had been well planned to provide challenge and stimulation. On some construction courses lecturers paid insufficient attention to the correction of students' written work. A construction learning-resource centre has been established as a base for individual learning but it is currently insufficiently developed to fulfil this purpose effectively.

44 Business studies programmes were individually tailored to students' needs and included the opportunity for all to learn a foreign language and have access to the open-learning workshop. Teaching and learning were well managed. Much of the learning took place in the model office which provides an environment in which students' skills can be assessed for NVQs. Teachers had prepared a well-structured sequence of learning materials and gave helpful tutorial support. On some business courses the use of information technology was insufficiently integrated into the learning programmes.

45 Teaching and learning in the catering section was of a high quality. The college's refectory and training restaurant provided a realistic work environment in which the students' skills could be assessed for the achievement of NVQs. The students valued the range and quality of practical experience which they gained in this way. Activities were carefully organised to allow students to demonstrate their skills. Theory and practice were well integrated. The teachers had designed learning packages which allowed students to work individually or in small groups. Collaborative learning was encouraged; for example, students at foundation level were supported by other students who were working towards higher levels. As a result of this approach, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were fully integrated into the classes and had good opportunities to progress. Students received regular verbal and written feedback from their teachers. A profile record of each student was built up showing progress and achievement. Staff and students showed a high degree of involvement in their work.

46 Leisure and tourism teaching was purposeful and the teachers' knowledge of the industry was used to good effect. Classes were well planned to provide continuity with previous sessions. Most classes included a variety of activities which maintained students' interest. For example, an introductory session on conservation began with students working in groups to produce a poster that was displayed on the wall. The teacher then illustrated the topic by a colour slide presentation of the area where students were to carry out conservation work later in the course. The students were actively involved throughout. In contrast, some classes in leisure and tourism were poorly organised and lacked rigour.

47 Teachers of health and social care maintained students' interest by using a variety of teaching and learning methods within each session. To enliven a session on infant feeding, students tasted and compared a variety of infant foods as well as discussing dietary guidelines and health and safety requirements. The majority of students participated in classroom activities. They were supported by regular feedback from teachers and through constructive comments on their assessed work. These included the correction of syntax, grammar and spelling.

48 Teaching schemes in humanities were well planned and classroom activities well structured. Teachers made good use of resources such as the overhead projector and handouts to supplement the discussion between teacher and students. Lively presentation of material and the enthusiastic contributions from students were evident in English and communications classes. However, there was little use of group work and few opportunities for students to lead the activities. In classes where they were in a minority, 16-18 year old students needed more encouragement. In many of the languages classes, students were able to work individually or in small groups, using audio-cassette players with headsets. The foreign language assistant provided helpful guidance and speaking practice. In some classes,

translation was over-used and there was little communication between students in the language being studied.

49 Adults returning to education are well supported through flexible study arrangements. These include attendance at an individual tutorial every three weeks to supplement study at home and opportunities to participate in open-learning workshops where students follow individual programmes at times to suit their personal commitments. Shift workers and parents of young children found such arrangements of particular value. In the individual tutorials for GCSE English, students received a high level of support. Teachers helped them to evaluate the work done since the last tutorial and to set targets for the next. The open-learning workshops in English and foreign languages were effectively organised and materials were well presented so that students were able to make rapid progress. The individual attention students received helped to build up their confidence.

50 In basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there was effective individual tutoring based upon positive relationships between students and their teachers. However, not all sessions were sufficiently challenging. Course documentation and students' records were comprehensive. Learning was systematically monitored. Initial assessment and subsequent learning support were effective but targets for achievement were inadequately developed. Work placements were relevant and well organised.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

51 Students were positive about their learning experiences. They were well motivated and informed about the range of opportunities following from their programmes of studies. They participated readily in discussion and talked confidently about their personal improvement plans, assignment programmes and work experience.

52 Adult students demonstrated high levels of motivation and commitment. They worked enthusiastically, competently applying their knowledge and skills in a wide variety of practical applications and contexts. For example, students on the NVQ business administration programme worked with considerable autonomy in the college model office.

53 The standard of written work was generally appropriate. The portfolios of evidence for students on the NVQ programmes in catering and hospitality were well written. In the teacher training programme, students produced detailed portfolios of evidence demonstrating high levels of achievement. On the GCSE English language programmes, students took the trouble to redraft work following constructive comments by their teachers.

54 The core skills of information technology, numeracy and communications were generally well developed by students in all

programme areas. For example, in a GCE A level English class, students studying a text by an American writer were able to use their linguistic knowledge to comment on the author's choice of language and imagery. In the majority of programmes, there were good opportunities for the development and use of information technology skills which were relevant to the students' main programme of study. However, on catering courses, students had little opportunity to practise or appreciate the application of information technology in commercial settings such as stock control and food ordering.

55 Students worked effectively as members of groups and readily helped one another. For example, language students worked in small groups in the learning workshops, communicating in a foreign language. Students following NVQs in catering and hospitality worked together effectively under realistic time pressures to produce meals of a high standard for the college refectory.

56 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were making effective progress. For example, one student, originally enrolled on an extended education programme, has achieved NVQ level 1 and is currently working towards NVQ level 2 and undertaking work experience for one day a week.

57 Ninety-seven per cent of the 65 students aged 16-18 in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

58 In 1993-94, 100 per cent pass rates were achieved in the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diplomas in public services, business studies, travel and tourism and leisure studies. NVQ achievements in catering and hospitality were particularly good at level 3, where students also obtained 100 per cent pass rates. Results above the national averages were obtained in the BTEC first diploma courses in caring and public services, RSA single subject courses, and courses for professional bodies. Overall, 70 per cent of full-time students who entered for examinations and assessment in 1993-94 were successful.

59 The 1994 examinations results at GCSE and GCE A level represent a considerable achievement for full-time and part-time students, many of whom have experienced no previous examination success. There were only 15 GCE A level students in 1994. At GCSE, the 250 entries of students aged 16-18 registered a pass rate, grades A-C, of 32 per cent compared with an average of 38 per cent for all sector colleges other than sixth form colleges. However, 69 per cent of students aged 19 years and over achieved grades A-C, compared with an average of 60 per cent nationally. Overall, there were good results in psychology and sociology, and satisfactory results in English, modern foreign languages and child psychology. The results in mathematics were poor: only 27 per cent of candidates achieved grades A-C.

60 Retention levels for 1993-94 varied between 75 per cent on intermediate programmes, 82 per cent on foundation programmes and 87 per cent on advanced programmes. This compares with an average withdrawal rate of 10.5 per cent for general further education colleges recorded by FEFC for 1993-94 and 9.6 per cent for all sector colleges over the same period. Retention levels for the 1994-95 academic year are particularly poor for the advanced GNVQ in health and community care, with 45 per cent of enrolled students withdrawing by the time of inspection. Retention is also poor on the adult returners' electronics course.

61 Of the full-time students who left college in 1993-94, 47 per cent entered employment, 31 per cent went on to courses in further education, 4 per cent went on to higher education, 1 per cent went on to youth training programmes, 6 per cent were seeking employment and the destinations of 11 per cent of students were unknown.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

62 The college management and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the assurance of quality in all aspects of the college's work. The college's aim expressed in the strategic plan is to underpin all activity with quality assurance procedures. The college was the first college in the country to achieve both British Standard 5750 and the Investors in People standard. There are systems and procedures to ensure that the quality standards already in place are continually improved. The college charter contains commitments on a range of facilities and services available to students and other clients. Students, teachers and support staff are well informed of the charter and its implications. Copies of the charter are given to potential students, work experience providers and also employers wishing to buy college training. Teachers and students are involved in an annual charter review process in order to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of all users of college facilities.

63 The terms of reference and responsibilities of the managers and committees charged with quality assurance functions are well documented and comprehensive. The vice-principal has overall responsibility for the implementation and review of the quality assurance policy. Quality assurance manuals detail the procedures and systems for academic programmes and cross-college services. The manuals are reviewed regularly to reflect the changing needs of the college and its students. The quality manuals help to ensure consistency of practice and have established the standards against which the quality of provision can be evaluated. Teachers and support staff understand and support the importance of the quality assurance procedures.

64 The assurance of quality is a thorough and continuous process in the college. The quality team, a working party of the academic board, meets regularly to receive reports on the operation of the quality system. An internal quality review team continuously reviews the implementation of

procedures at both programme and cross-college level and reports to the quality team. The senior management team holds regular management review meetings to receive reports from external assessors and the internal quality review team. However, the quality review team does not submit a summative report of its work to either the academic board or the senior management team.

65 Programme teams meet regularly. The programme team minutes indicate that attention is given to course administration and students' progress. Issues identified from team meetings and action to be taken are clearly stated and monitored. Full-time and part-time programmes are reviewed twice a year and plans for improvement are drawn up as a result of these reviews. There is a common structure to the reports with detailed procedures on the issues to be addressed. Programme reviews incorporate reliable statistics on students' retention, progression and achievement. However, the use of performance indicators is not consistent across all programme teams and reviews do not provide sufficient evaluation of students' and employers' perceptions of programme provision or external verifier reports. Senior management review meetings effectively monitor the plans for improvement produced by programme teams. New programme approvals are the responsibility of the college curriculum manager. There is no formal working party of the academic board to review course submissions. The establishment of customer service standards and the monitoring of cross-college learner support are underdeveloped.

66 Quality improvement teams are established to review specific aspects of provision. College refectory services have recently been reviewed and improved as a result. A group is currently reviewing the work of college receptionists and telephonists. Staff and students use the college suggestions and complaints procedure to comment on any aspect of college provision. The staff comment that their views are carefully considered and that action is taken where possible. Quality initiatives are communicated effectively to staff through amendments to the appropriate quality manual and through the college newsletter.

67 A self-assessment report was written by the college to support the inspection process. It reported against all the inspection headings outlined in the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* and clearly detailed the institution's assessment of its own strengths and weaknesses. The preparation of the report involved governors, senior management, section leaders and staff with cross-college responsibilities. In the report the college underestimated some of its strengths; for example, it omitted to mention the effective relationships and channels of communication within the college. The college's evaluation was supported with relevant evidence but in some instances there was a lack of supporting quantitative and performance data. There was substantial agreement between the college's assessment and the judgements made by the inspection team.

68 There is a clearly-defined link between the staff-development policy and the college strategic plan. Staff induction, staff development and appraisal processes are carefully planned. Teachers and support staff speak well of these processes. All full-time teaching and support staff are given the opportunity to determine their own training needs for the next financial year. This is done through the staff appraisal scheme every two years and through the completion of staff needs analysis forms during the alternate year. A two hours staff-development entitlement is available weekly to enhance the skills of all teaching and support staff. Recent priorities for teaching staff have been Training and Development Lead Body and GNVQ training. For support staff, the priorities are NVQ accreditation and supervisory management development. The senior management team is committed to working towards the achievement of NVQ level 5 in management. Middle and aspiring managers have commenced NVQ level 4 in management. Individual training events are evaluated through questionnaires and debriefing meetings with line managers. However, the evaluation and dissemination process requires further development. The staff-development committee monitors staff development to ensure that it is consistent with the college strategic plan. An annual report is submitted to the academic board and informs the annual college report to the corporation. The college currently allocates 3 per cent of the total college budget to staff training.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 Of the 61 full-time staff engaged in direct learning contact, 55 per cent have degrees or equivalent vocational qualifications. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced for the curriculum provided. Eighty-nine per cent possess a teaching qualification. The college recognises that, as it develops more advanced and higher education courses, a greater percentage of staff will require degree and higher degree qualifications.

70 The college relies significantly on part-time staff to deliver the curriculum. In some areas such as mathematics, English, communications and modern languages this is reducing the consistency of practice, particularly as some part-time staff cannot attend section meetings during college hours. In mathematics there is no full-time teacher and the poor co-ordination of part-time teachers has adversely affected GCSE results. The college has a priority to appoint more full-time staff to these curriculum areas. Efficiency of staff deployment is carefully monitored by the principal. Actual and potential class sizes and taught hours are considered and compared.

71 Overall, great strides have been made in the levels of administrative and technical support. There are now 72 full-time equivalent posts relative to 84 full-time equivalent teaching staff. The 10 full-time technicians

effectively support key curriculum areas and central services such as reprographics and audio-visual equipment. In construction there is a shortage of support in workshop areas. Technicians and caretakers meet twice a term as a group under the direction of the vice-principal. A number of the administrative staff are deployed flexibly to provide support in areas such as caretaking and minibuss driving. The finance function is being strengthened as the college moves towards unit costing and the delivery of its own payroll.

Equipment/learning resources

72 Many curriculum areas across the college are well equipped. In catering nearly £150,000 has been spent during the last three years upgrading kitchens which students use as part of their NVQ training. In the newly-developing media studies area, television and digital recording studios have recently been created and equipped to commercial standards. There has been a significant investment in the welding facility at the Barnsley Road annexe. In business administration there is modern typing and wordprocessing equipment as well as a well-resourced model office. A new travel office, approved by the Association of British Travel Agents, has on-line viewdata facilities and is well stocked with reference and publicity materials. Eleven photocopiers situated across the college sites provide a readily available reprographic facility. Audio-visual equipment can be delivered to all parts of the college on request. All classrooms have overhead projectors and whiteboards. In construction there are some shortages of equipment in key areas, although there has been considerable investment in signwriting and screen printing materials. In mathematics there are insufficient computers and graphical calculators. There is no documented strategy for the replacement of equipment; section leaders are responsible for making decisions about the renewal of items.

73 One of the college sites has been designated as a technology and telecommunications centre. On this site, the information technology workstations are of the latest standard and include computer-aided design facilities. Open-access information technology facilities are available in the resource centres on all sites although the hardware available is becoming outdated. The networking of machines is limited to one room at the technology centre and modern software environments are only just being established. There are some useful software guides to support independent study in the resource centres. Overall there are 137 workstations in use which, in relation to full-time equivalent students, represents a ratio of 1:7.

74 Library and learning resource centres are located on all sites and an open-learning workshop facility, available to the general public, has been established in the main college building. Each resource centre has two compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database machines and a wide range of books, periodicals and other resources for learning. There is good communication between the four library staff who are located on

different sites but rotate between them from time to time. Currently a manual issuing system is in operation although a computer database of books is being constructed. No security system exists at present and book losses on one site have recently been significant. The library is open only during daytime hours. However, there is an experimental system of opening for one evening a month to assess the demand for extended opening hours. The open-learning workshop is staffed throughout the week by teachers with different subject specialisms. So far this academic year over 300 members of the public have taken advantage of this facility.

Accommodation

75 The main college building, which was completed in 1976, has been extensively modernised. It is carpeted throughout and has high-quality classroom accommodation. Access for wheelchair users is provided to all floors by a special lift. The reception area, which also houses the college travel shop, provides a welcoming environment. Storage space is limited and, as a result, some classrooms are used for storage. An annexe, which is over 100 years old, and a number of mobile classrooms, are also located on the main site. The quality of the exterior of this accommodation is generally poor although standards of internal decoration, furnishing and display are good.

76 The technology and telecommunications centre lies about one mile east of the main building. It was acquired by the college shortly before incorporation and has been completely refurbished internally. It provides high-quality accommodation. Standards of cleanliness are good at this centre, where the college employs its own cleaners, but less satisfactory at other sites where external contractors are used. Frequent minibus services operated by the college offer convenient access between sites.

77 Although the majority of the accommodation is of good quality there are some deficiencies at the Barnsley Road annexe. This annexe, which is situated to the west of the main site, is a former council depot and consists of a number of industrial units. The college has converted much of this building into workshops and classroom accommodation. Some of the rooms lack ventilation and natural light and a number of rooms are inadequately heated. Access for students with physical disabilities is also more limited at this site. The college nursery has 36 places. It has a large open-plan play area as well as a rest room, a dining area and toilet facilities.

78 The college is taking a lead role in a £6.5 million building development adjacent to the technology and telecommunications centre as part of the successful Dearne Valley City Challenge bid. The new buildings are expected to be completed by late 1996. A detailed accommodation strategy has been produced setting out options for expansion which are linked to projected student growth. There is a fully-costed, three-year rolling maintenance plan. A health and safety committee, chaired by the vice-principal, meets regularly and a risk assessment programme is due to be completed by the end of April 1995. There are limited social and

recreational facilities for students and staff on all sites but this issue is due to be addressed in the new building programme.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

79 The college is making good progress towards fulfilling its mission to provide high-quality education and training to serve the needs both of individual learners and the local community. The strengths of the college are:

- the strong response to national targets through an increasing range of provision
- the effective links with industry and the local community
- the shared commitment of governors, management and staff to the aims of the college
- the responsive management structure
- the open management and good communications
- the commitment of staff to the support of students
- the highly effective quality assurance and staff-development processes
- the high levels of administrative and technical support
- the access to courses through flexible modes of attendance
- the high level of students' achievement on vocational courses.

80 If the college is to improve further the quality of its provision it should:

- increase the range of basic education and foundation level courses
- continue to develop its management information systems
- strengthen the co-ordination and monitoring of students' guidance and support
- address the low retention rates in some areas
- address the deficiencies in some of its accommodation.

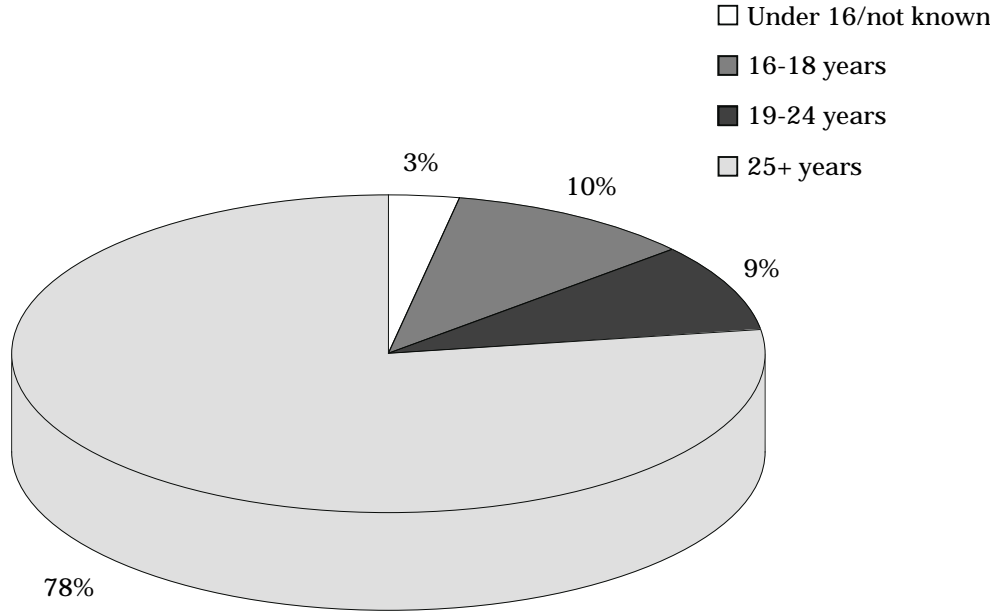
FIGURES

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Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

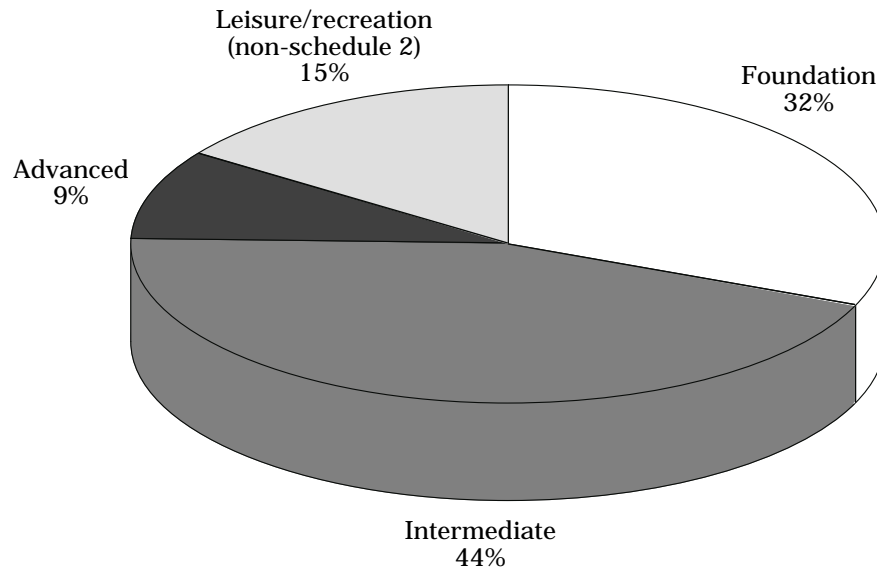
Rockingham College of Further Education: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)



Enrolments: 5,268

Figure 2

Rockingham College of Further Education: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 5,268

Note: this chart excludes 15 higher education enrolments.

Figure 3

Rockingham College of Further Education: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

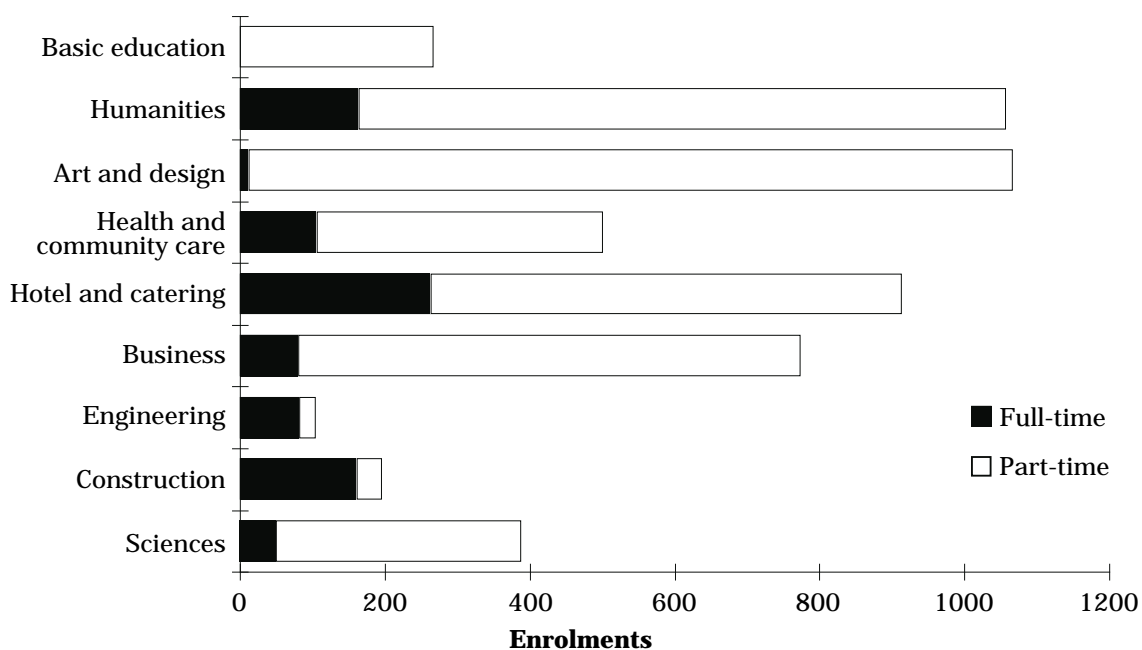


Figure 4

Rockingham College of Further Education: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

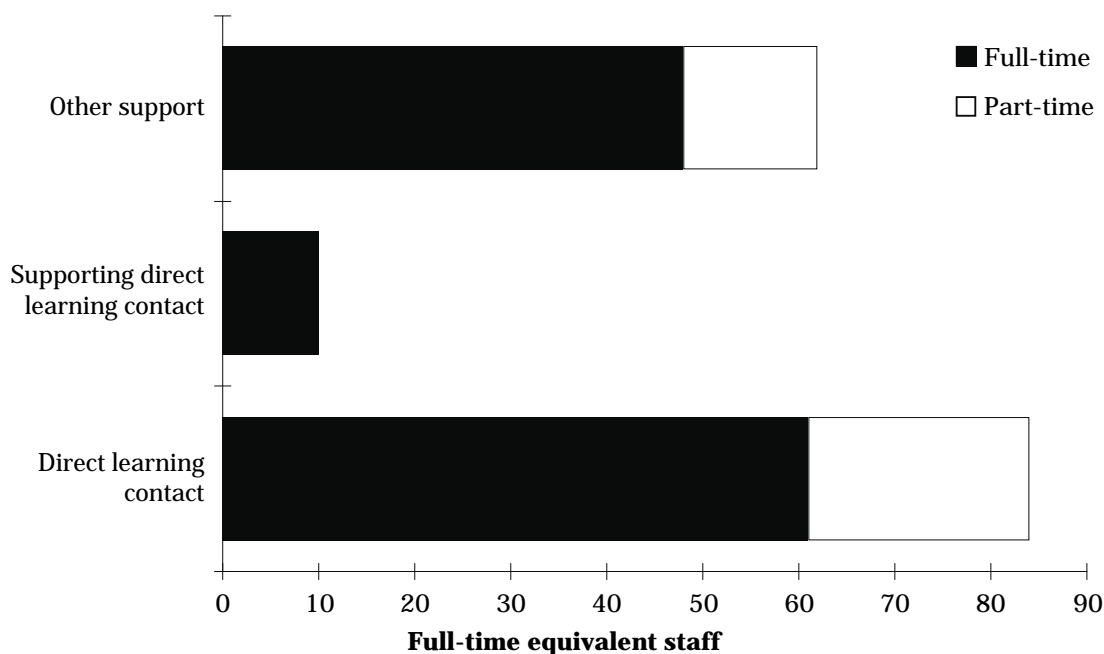
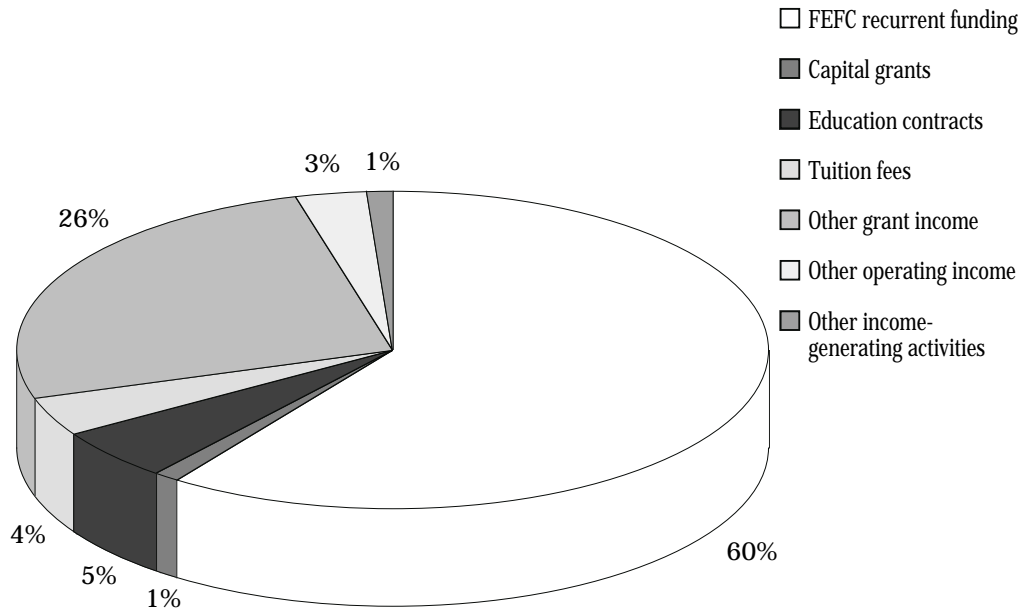


Figure 5

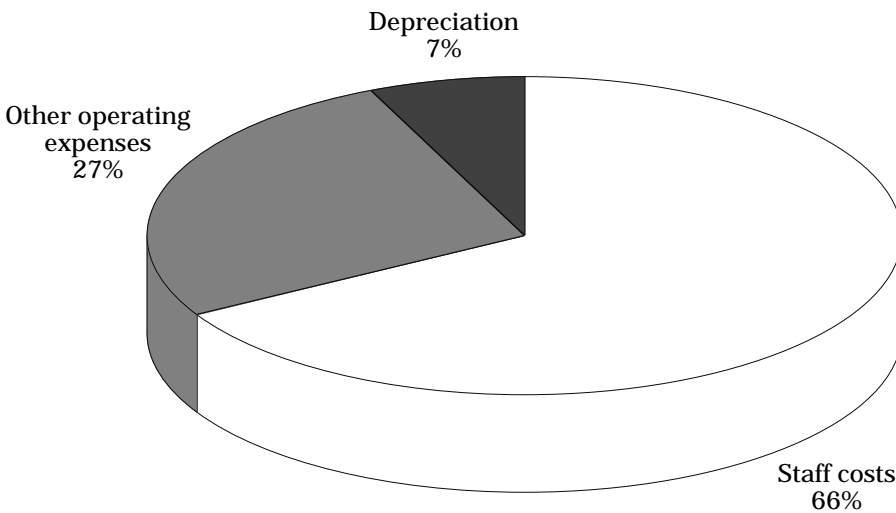
Rockingham College of Further Education: income (for 16 months to July 1994)



Income: £4,795,000

Figure 6

Rockingham College of Further Education: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £4,755,000

Note: this chart excludes £12,000 interest payable.

